



April 12, 2011

U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW., LBJ
Washington, DC 20202-4537
ICDocketMgr@ed.gov

Re: Second follow-up field test for the baccalaureate and beyond longitudinal study of 2008/ 2012 (B&B:08/12)

Dear Sir/Madam:

On behalf of the nearly 100,000 bipartisan members and donors of the American Association of University Women (AAUW), I am pleased to share AAUW's comments on the second follow-up field test for the baccalaureate and beyond longitudinal study of 2008/ 2012. AAUW's 2009-2011 Public Policy Program affirms our commitment to "a strong system of public education that promotes gender fairness, equity, and diversity... and advocates increased support for, and access to, higher education for women and other disadvantaged populations (and) increased access to higher education."¹

The primary purpose of the baccalaureate and beyond longitudinal series is to track and describe the various paths of recent college graduates into employment and additional education. Baseline data for the cohort under examination were collected as part of the National Postsecondary Student Aid Study, and the first follow-up interview collected information from respondents one year after they received their bachelor's degree. This follow-up will collect data four years after the cohort have received their bachelor degrees, and will track their education and employment choices.²

AAUW places particular importance on two areas of the field test:

- Cross-tabulation of data
- Data accessibility

Cross-Tabulation of Data

AAUW suggests the field test data be cross-tabulated and disaggregated by all possible topics, including gender, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, English proficiency, mobility, disability, urban, rural, suburban districts, and other population characteristics wherever possible. This information would be very valuable, as seen in the marked variance in college completion rates between genders and races.³ The data from the field test would be a valuable resource and provide the best picture of the cohort's opportunities, challenges, and choices.

Data Accessibility

Any data collected should be made publicly available in a consistent and timely manner, and be as transparent as possible while taking into consideration students'

privacy rights. Additionally, the data should be presented in an accessible format, such as SAS, SPSS, or Microsoft Excel. The field test presents a tremendous opportunity to track and learn more about the cohort's decision-making, and AAUW urges the Department to make this data collection as comprehensive and accessible as possible. The results of this study will allow policy-makers and educators to understand the challenges faced by this cohort and act accordingly.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments on this important issue. I look forward to working with you on the issue of educational and employment opportunity. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 202-785-7720, or Beth Scott, regulatory affairs manager, at 202-728-7617.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Lisa M. Maatz".

Lisa M. Maatz
Director, Public Policy and Government Relations

¹ AAUW. (June 2009). *2009-11 AAUW Public Policy Program*. Retrieved April 8, 2011, from http://www.aauw.org/advocacy/issue_advocacy/principles_priorities.cfm.

² The Federal Register. (February 11, 2011). *Volume 76, Number 29*. Retrieved April 8, 2011, from <http://frwebgate3.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/PDFgate.cgi?WAISdocID=6gUrVz/3/2/0&WAIAction=retrieve>.

³ U.S. Census. (June 2004). *Educational Attainment in the United States: 2003*. Retrieved April 8, 2011, from <http://www.census.gov/prod/2004pubs/p20-550.pdf>